

THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE IN MODERN TIMES

Adapted from <http://www.cnn.com/EVENTS/1997/mlk/links.html>

1954 -- U.S. Supreme Court declares school segregation unconstitutional in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka ruling.

1955 -- Rosa Parks refuses to move to the back of a Montgomery, Alabama, bus as required by city ordinance; boycott follows and bus segregation ordinance is declared unconstitutional.

Federal Interstate Commerce Commission bans segregation on interstate trains and buses.

1956 -- Coalition of Southern congressmen calls for massive resistance to Supreme Court desegregation rulings.

1957 -- Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus uses National Guard to block nine black students from attending a Little Rock High School; following a court order, President Eisenhower sends in federal troops to ensure compliance.

1960 -- Four black college students begin sit-ins at lunch counter of a Greensboro, North Carolina, restaurant where black patrons are not served.

Congress approves a watered-down voting rights act after a filibuster by Southern senators.

1961 -- Freedom Rides begin from Washington, D.C., into Southern states.

1962 -- President Kennedy sends federal troops to the University of Mississippi to quell riots so that James Meredith, the school's first black student, can attend.

The Supreme Court rules that segregation is unconstitutional in all transportation facilities.

The Department of Defense orders full integration of military reserve units, the National Guard excluded.

1963 -- Civil rights leader Medgar Evers is killed by a sniper's bullet.

Race riots prompt modified martial law in Cambridge, Maryland.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivers "I Have a Dream" speech to hundreds of thousands at the March on Washington.

Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, leaves four young black girls dead.

1964 -- Congress passes Civil Rights Act declaring discrimination based on race illegal after 75-day long filibuster.

Three civil rights workers disappear in Mississippi after being stopped for speeding; found buried six weeks later.

Riots in Harlem, Philadelphia.

1965 -- March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to demand protection for voting rights; two civil rights workers slain earlier in the year in Selma.

Malcolm X assassinated.

Riot in Watts, Los Angeles.

New voting rights act signed.

1966 -- Edward Brooke, R-Massachusetts, elected first black U.S. senator in 85 years.

1967 -- Riots in Detroit, Newark, New Jersey.

Thurgood Marshall first African American to be named to the Supreme Court.

Carl Stokes (Cleveland) and Richard G. Hatcher (Gary, Indiana) elected first black mayors of major U.S. cities.

1968 -- Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee; James Earl Ray later convicted and sentenced to 99 years in prison.

Poor People's March on Washington -- planned by King before his death -- goes on.

*Brown v. Board of Educator of Topeka, Kansas,
et al., 347 U.S. 483 Opinion of the Majority written by Chief Justice Earl Warren
(1954)*

IN APPROACHING THIS PROBLEM, WE CANNOT TURN THE CLOCK BACK to 1868, when the Amendment was adopted, or even to 1896, when *Plessy v. Ferguson* was written. We must consider public education in the light of its full development and its present place in American life throughout the Nation. Only in this way can it be determined if segregation in public schools deprives these plaintiffs of the equal protection of the laws.

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does. . . .

We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. This disposition makes unnecessary any discussion whether such segregation also violates the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

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a time for justice

1. As you watch the movie, think about the following themes that are presented. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

- What were the goals of the Civil Rights movement?
- What were the strategies used by the movement participants?
- Why did the movement succeed?

2. Given the chance to participate in any of the events of the movement, which events would you participate in and why?

3. If you were going to plan a freedom ride anywhere in the world today, where would you travel, and what injustice would you protest?

Key names and terms you will be responsible for:

Emmit Till

Rosa Parks

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Little Rock, AR: Sept. 4, 1957

Sit-ins

Freedom Riders

16th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, AL

summer of 1964

Cecil Price and the civil rights workers

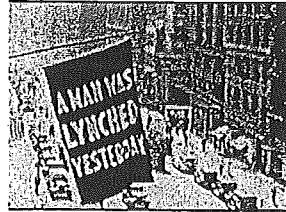
Jimmie Lee Jackson


Bloody Sunday

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

GROUP / ORGANIZATION

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the oldest and largest civil rights organization in the United States, with a national membership of more than 500,000 people distributed among more than 2,000 local chapters. The NAACP's major objective is encouraging racial integration through education and lobbying.



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The NAACP was founded on February 12, 1909, the 100th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birthday. It was formed from a small committee of signers to a proclamation decrying the way African Americans were treated socially and legally in the United States. It had its roots in the historic Niagara movement of 1905, held in upstate New York to discuss the treatment of African Americans. At that time, a powerful civil rights organization working successfully toward equal treatment for African Americans seemed far off, although there were several attempts in the next four years to formulate such a group. In May 1908, a convention was called to discuss "the condition of the Negro in America." Such notables as J.E. Spingarn, Dr. Henry Moskowitz, Moorfield Storey, Frederick L. McGhee, and W.E.B. Du Bois attended this convention. The outcome of the work at the convention produced an organization called the National Negro Committee (NNC). On February 12, 1909, the NNC, together with delegates from the Niagara movement, formed the NAACP.

The NAACP has worked toward implementing the national civil rights acts in the areas of housing, employment, voting, schools, transportation, and recreation. Although it was once viewed as quite radical, the NAACP has from the outset chosen not to use direct confrontation, focusing rather on litigation and legislative lobbying as its principal tactics.

The NAACP has worked actively toward winning civil rights for minorities since its formation in New York City in 1909. It was founded after the National Conference on the Negro was convened on May 9 of that year. Its membership and activities grew tremendously after World War I, when many African Americans migrated from the South to Northern cities. The NAACP has been the most prominent organization in defining U.S. civil rights objectives and agendas.



The group played a key role in a 1915 legal decision that struck down the grandfather clause, which had enabled citizens to avoid poll taxes or literacy tests if they could show that their grandfather had voted—a test most African Americans failed because their grandparents had been slaves. In 1927, the organization pushed for the eradication of

Click to Enlarge  all-white primaries. The NAACP was also a powerful force in the Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education (1954), which deemed public school segregation to be unconstitutional. Among its greatest lobbying efforts have been the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964), the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (which included the Fair Housing Title), and the Civil Rights Act of 1975.

Traditionally a moderate voice for minority rights and African-American empowerment, the NAACP lost part of its Southern membership during the 1960s to other such civil rights agencies as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which used more direct mass action. Neither were the legal strategies of the NAACP compatible with the black power movement, from which the NAACP withdrew support during its 1966 national convention. The NAACP remained important as a national organization, however, and also cooperated with other agencies, most notably during the March on Washington in 1963.

In terms of organization, there are five NAACP committees that deal, respectively, with health, international affairs, legal matters, awarding the annual Spingarn Medal for the highest achievement by an African American, and awarding the Walter White Award; four departments that handle, respectively, economic development, voter education, regulation, and the Washington Bureau; and two programs that concentrate on prison affairs and youth. The organization's national headquarters is located in Baltimore, Maryland with active branches addressing local concerns. The organization holds a convention every summer. The NAACP is separate from the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund Inc., which was established in 1940 by the NAACP but eventually became a self-sustaining entity. It is active in influencing national civil rights doctrine through Supreme Court decisions.

In recent decades, the NAACP has broadened its scope by committing itself to the struggle for equal rights in the rest of the world. In the United States, as the Republican Party has worked in Congress to limit the power of an activist government, the NAACP has become more significant as a local-level watchdog of civil rights.

ID: 253522

[back to top](#)

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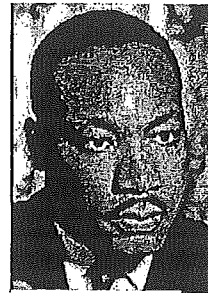
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
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Southern Christian Leadership Conference

GROUP / ORGANIZATION

Martin Luther King Jr. organized the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Atlanta, Georgia in 1957 and remained at its head until his assassination in 1968. Its goal during the civil rights movement was to further the cause through peaceful but powerful demonstrations.



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The SCLC advocates assertive nonviolence and passive resistance. In 1963, the group led a march on Washington, D.C. that put the civil rights movement in the national spotlight. That year, the group also organized a campaign for desegregation in Birmingham, Alabama restaurants, department stores, and hotels. In 1965, the SCLC conducted a voter registration drive for African Americans in Selma, Alabama that won nationwide attention when the police tried to stop the activity.

In the late 1960s, however, the SCLC's peaceful ways began to meet with increasing scorn from more militant African Americans, and it was pushed from the forefront of the civil rights movement. The group fell even further out of public view after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

The SCLC is primarily led by African-American Protestant ministers and works to further civil rights for African Americans and other minority groups. King was the group's first president, serving from 1957 until his assassination in 1968. Ralph Abernathy served as president from 1968 until 1977 and Joseph Lowery from 1977 to 1997. Martin Luther King III took over the position in 1997 and remained president until January 2004. In addition to its campaigns for civil and equal rights, the SCLC assists African Americans in the areas of employment discrimination and health care. Working out of an office on Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, down the street from the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, its agenda includes "Wings of Hope," an antidrug program, and "Stop the Killing!," an attempt to end the proliferation of guns in the hands of youngsters.

ID: 253588

[back to top](#)

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
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Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

GROUP / ORGANIZATION

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded in 1960 to organize the protests of African-American college students against segregation in the Deep South. It included Ella Jo Baker and John Lewis among its founders, and Martin Luther King Jr. was an adviser.



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The SNCC was inspired by the Greensboro sit-in, during which four African-American students refused to leave the Woolworth's lunch counter that had refused to serve them. This protest technique became the main weapon of the SNCC, and students all over the South used it to try to force desegregation of public facilities. In addition, the group coordinated voter registration drives for African Americans. The SNCC sponsored the Mississippi Project in 1964, in which about 800 volunteers helped thousands of African Americans register to vote.

The SNCC's statement of purpose maintained that

nonviolence . . . seeks a social order of justice permeated by love. . . . Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. Mutual regard cancels enmity. Justice for all overthrows injustice. . . . By appeal to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.

In 1966, however, Stokely Carmichael assumed the leadership of the SNCC and helped to oversee its transition from a nonviolent organization to one that embraced a militant, separatist, and revolutionary program. The new leader advocated black power as a worthier goal than the integration of blacks into white society. He urged African Americans to gain political and economic control of their own communities, rejecting much of the SNCC's white support. As a result of these changes, the importance of the SNCC within the civil rights movement rapidly declined. Carmichael resigned in 1967 and was succeeded by H. Rap Brown. The SNCC changed its name to Student National Coordinating Committee in 1969, but the group broke up in the early 1970s.

ID: 253594

[back to top](#)

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Malcolm X

INDIVIDUAL

Malcolm X was important in shaping a Black Muslim and black power movement that challenged the nonviolent and integrationist struggle for African-American equality favored by Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights movement.



At 13, Malcolm was sent to a juvenile detention home for a minor act of mischief. Three years later, he went to live with a sister in Boston. No longer attending school, he took on odd jobs and learned about street life in the black ghetto. Eventually he got a job as sandwich man on trains between Boston and New York City and was quickly introduced to drugs and crime in Harlem. Sporting a zoot suit (a fad in the 1940s, it was a suit with long, draped pants, tight at the ankle, and a jacket with wide shoulders), Malcolm became a recognized underworld figure. He talked his way into a draft exemption from the armed forces during World War II. Back in Boston, he was arrested in 1946 for burglary and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He was 20 years old.

Prison was to be Malcolm's salvation. He began to read history, philosophy, and religion. Through his brother, he learned about the Nation of Islam, also known as the Black Muslims, led by Elijah Muhammad. Based in Chicago, Muhammad preached against white racism and advocated a Muslim way of life, which forbade drinking, smoking, and drugs; he insisted that members have jobs. The movement's separatist ideology was extreme. Not only did it dismiss the civil rights movement's goal of full black integration into white society as illusory, it also depicted all whites as descended from the devil, born to harm blacks.

By the time Malcolm was released from prison in 1952, he was committed to the Nation of Islam and took the name Malcolm X, dropping what the Muslims considered a slave name. He progressed through the ranks rapidly, recruiting first in Detroit, then Boston and Philadelphia, and finally in New York. Malcolm had become an eloquent speaker, and owing largely to his efforts, which included starting a national Muslim newspaper, the movement attracted thousands of members. In 1959, the nation watched a television documentary on the Muslims called "The Hate That Hate Produced" on *The Mike Wallace Show*, and by the end of the year, the Muslims could claim 100,000 followers. One source of new recruits for the Muslims was the country's jails. An estimated 600 convicts joined the movement each year, most of them staying out of jail when released and dramatically altering their values and behavior.

On one hand, the Muslims were effective in organizing schools and businesses and in providing encouragement and moral support for their members. On the other hand, the movement frightened whites and the growing civil rights movement. Since the Muslims were anti-integration, they considered nonviolence absurd and would not cooperate in demonstrating with such groups as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or the Congress of Racial Equality. Malcolm was especially extreme in his statements of hate for whites.

By the early 1960s, Malcolm's position of leadership had brought him into conflict with Muhammad as well as with some of the other leaders, who criticized him for forgetting the original religious intentions of the Muslims and being swayed by the glory of politics. When in 1963 Malcolm spoke of President John F. Kennedy's assassination as a case of "the chickens coming home to roost," suggesting that the hate directed at African Americans had been responsible for the killing of the president, Muhammad suspended him from the movement.

On his part, Malcolm had become suspicious of Muhammad's lifestyle and morals and the general Muslim policy of "nonengagement" from active confrontation with racism. In 1964, he broke with Muhammad and formed his own group, called the Muslim Mosque, Inc., determined to make the group international and to initiate a back-to-Africa movement. The same year, he made a pilgrimage to Mecca and visited several African countries, meeting and having discussions with prominent Muslim leaders and scholars. He discovered that the views of many Muslims differed from his racist views, and he seriously reconsidered his position. When he returned to the United States, he announced that his visit in the Islamic world had helped to alter his view that all whites were evil and racist. He now believed that the plight of African Americans was caused by Western civilization and hoped that Islamic leaders abroad would help him bring before the United Nations the issue of American racism and its capitalistic ramifications in Africa. He formed the Organization of Afro-American Unity to unify black groups he had previously feuded with. This willingness to work with integrationists offended more militant Muslim followers at the same time that his anticapitalism brought support from Marxists, though he was not actually committed to Marxism.

In early 1965, Malcolm's house was firebombed, and a week later, he was assassinated on February 21, 1965 while speaking at a rally at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem. He was 39 years old. He had long believed he would be killed by the Black Muslims, but although two of the three men convicted of shooting him were members of the Nation of Islam, no conspiracy was ever proved.

Malcolm, who had renamed himself El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz after his pilgrimage to Mecca, was survived by his wife Betty Shabazz, whom he had married in 1958, and four children. His funeral was attended by many African-American leaders, including Bayard Rustin, who had differed with him, and a huge crowd of followers. His words and actions have continued to fuel separatist tendencies in African-American communities, especially during moments, such as the late 1960s and late 1980s, when progress toward the integration of black and white America has been halted or reversed.

That people responded so strongly in different ways to a man who began his life by hating whites and ended it by having questioned his own deepest convictions is evidence of Malcolm X's influence and at the same time characteristic of an era of great struggle in the American conscience.

ID: 247376

[back to top](#)

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